

— TRAINING SYSTEM · THE ENGINE

CONDITIONING

An eight-week engine that bolts onto any program — leaner, fitter, harder to tire, without surrendering the muscle or strength you built.

LEVEL

Intermediate

LENGTH

8 Weeks

METHOD

Bolt-on

FOCUS

Work Capacity



01 — BEGIN HERE

BUILD THE ENGINE.

A strong, muscular body that gasses up a flight of stairs is only half-built. Conditioning is the engine underneath — the work capacity that makes you leaner, recovers you between sets, and protects your heart. Eight weeks, mostly easy, bolted onto whatever you're already running.

FOR YOU, IF

You train but tire easily, you want a leaner athletic look, or you want a healthier heart and better recovery. Any level — this layers onto any program.

HOW IT WORKS

It doesn't replace your training — it bolts on. Two to three easy sessions and your daily steps, with a little hard work added in the middle weeks. Built to never steal recovery from the lifts.

BY THE END OF WEEK EIGHT, YOU WILL

Recover faster between heavy sets · climb stairs and chase life without gassing out · carry a lower resting heart rate · and own two cardio "engines" you can run for the rest of your life.

WHAT'S INSIDE

The principles & the plan at a glance	P. 03
The two engines · zone-2 & intervals	P. 05
The 8-week template	P. 06
Interval sessions & zone-2 sessions	P. 07
Steps & NEAT · bolting onto your program	P. 09
Fuel · recovery & the heart	P. 11
The trackers · print these	P. 13
Questions, answered	P. 15



02

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

Conditioning is simple, and almost everyone does it backwards. These five set it right.

01 BUILD THE BASE FIRST

Most of conditioning is easy aerobic work. The engine is built low and slow — long, gentle sessions — long before any hard intervals enter the picture.

02 TWO ENGINES

Aerobic (zone-2: long, easy) and anaerobic (intervals: short, hard). You train both — but mostly the first. Most people skip the base and overdose the intervals.

03 BOLT ON, DON'T BULLDOZE

Conditioning serves your lifting, not the reverse. Schedule it so it never robs recovery from heavy training — and if something has to give, intervals go first.

04 NEAT IS THE QUIET ENGINE

Daily steps and incidental movement do more for your conditioning and leanness than any single session. The base of the base is simply walking. → p. 09

05 RECOVER TO ADAPT

Intervals are a stress; the engine grows in the easy days between them and in the final back-off week. Hard every day builds nothing but fatigue.



03

THE PLAN AT A GLANCE

Eight weeks, one page. Screenshot it. Build the base, add a little hard work, then absorb.

THE ARC · FOUR PHASES

WEEKS 1-2

BASE

Zone-2 only. Build the aerobic floor. 2-3 easy sessions a week.

WEEKS 3-5

BUILD

Add one interval session a week. Keep the zone-2.

WEEKS 6-7

SHARPEN

Two interval sessions a week; zone-2 maintains the base.

WEEK 8

RECOVER

Ease off — zone-2 only. Let the engine consolidate.

THE TWO ENGINES

ZONE 2

AEROBIC · MOST OF IT

- 1 Easy, conversational pace
- 2 20-45 min
- 3 Builds the base & recovery
- 4 Almost boring — that's right

INTERVALS

ANAEROBIC · A LITTLE

- 1 Short, hard efforts + rest
- 2 1-2 sessions / week, max
- 3 Builds peak capacity
- 4 Away from heavy leg days

THE ONE RULE

Most of it easy, a little of it hard. Build the aerobic base first, then sprinkle intervals on top — never at the expense of the lifts that keep your muscle.



04

THE TWO ENGINES

You don't need a heart-rate monitor — you need to know two paces. The talk test is enough to find them both.

ZONE 2 · THE BASE

The pace where you can hold a conversation — roughly 60–70% of max heart rate. Nasal breathing stays easy. It feels almost too gentle. This is where the engine is built and recovery is aided.

INTERVALS · THE TOP END

Short, hard efforts you cannot talk through, with rest between. Roughly 80–95% of max. They sharpen peak capacity and VO2max — powerful, costly, used sparingly.

THE FIVE ZONES, BY FEEL

ZONE	~ % MAX HR	FEELS LIKE · USE
1 · Recovery	< 60%	A stroll. Warm-up, cool-down, walking.
2 · Aerobic	60–70%	Conversational. The base — most of your sessions.
3 · Tempo	70–80%	Short sentences. The "grey zone" — use it little.
4 · Threshold	80–90%	A few words. The home of most intervals.
5 · Max	90–100%	No words. All-out, short bursts only.

No monitor? Max HR $\approx$ 220 – your age as a rough anchor — but the talk test beats any number. Zone 2 = you can chat; intervals = you can't.



05

THE 8-WEEK TEMPLATE

The whole block on one table. Zone-2 can go anywhere — even on rest days. Intervals go on their own day, **away** from heavy squat and deadlift sessions.

WEEK	ZONE-2	INTERVALS	STEPS · INTENT
1 · Base	2–3 × 20–30 min	—	8k · establish the floor
2 · Base	3 × 25–35 min	—	8k · extend duration
3 · Build	2–3 × 30 min	1 (easy)	8–10k · introduce intervals
4 · Build	2–3 × 30–40 min	1	8–10k
5 · Build	2 × 35–45 min	1	8–10k
6 · Sharpen	2 × 30 min	2	10k · raise the top end
7 · Sharpen	2 × 30 min	2	10k · peak capacity
8 · Recover	2–3 × easy	—	8k · absorb & consolidate

Put intervals on an upper-body or rest day. Keep at least a day between hard intervals and heavy leg training, in either direction. **Steps and easy zone-2 need no spacing** — do them daily.



06

INTERVAL SESSIONS

Pick one per interval day and rotate. Warm up 5–8 min easy first, cool down after. Low-impact tools — bike, rower, incline walk, sled — are kinder to joints than running.

SESSION	STRUCTURE	BUILDS · NOTES
4 × 4 VO2MAX CLASSIC	4 min Z4 / 3 min easy	Aerobic power. Start here in the Build weeks.
30 : 30 MIXED	10–12 × 30s hard / 30s easy	Repeatable high-end work. Time-efficient.
Minute repeats THRESHOLD	10 × 1 min hard / 1 min easy	Sustainable hard pace. Simple to scale.
Short sprints ANAEROBIC	8 × 20s all-out / 90s easy	Top-end power. Bike or rower — safest all-out.
Hill / incline repeats STRENGTH-ENDURANCE	6–8 × 45–60s steep	Leg-friendly grind. Walk down to recover.

In the Build weeks, the hard portions are genuinely hard but controlled (~RPE 8). In the Sharpen weeks you can touch all-out on the shortest efforts. If your lifts start to suffer, that's your signal to pull intervals back.



07

ZONE-2 SESSIONS

This is the bulk of the program and the part everyone rushes. Done right, it is so easy it feels like cheating — and that is exactly why it works.

PICK A TOOL — KINDEST TO THE JOINTS FIRST

MODALITY	NOTES
Incline walk	The best all-rounder. Low impact, easy to hold zone 2, can be done daily.
Cycling / stationary bike	Zero impact, easy to pace. Great for longer sessions.
Rowing	Full-body and efficient — keep the stroke relaxed to stay in zone 2.
Easy jog · elliptical	Fine if your joints are happy and you can keep it genuinely easy.

HOW TO DO IT

Build from **20 minutes to 45** across the eight weeks. Hold the conversational pace the whole time. If you can't speak in full sentences, you're going too hard — slow down.

WHEN TO DO IT

Anywhere — after lifting, on rest days, in the morning. Easy zone-2 aids recovery, so it rarely interferes with the gym. More is fine, as long as it stays easy.



08

STEPS & NEAT

The most underrated conditioning tool isn't a session at all. It's the movement scattered through your day — and for most people it moves the needle more than any workout.

WHAT IT IS

NEAT — non-exercise activity. Walking, standing, errands, stairs, fidgeting. It quietly burns more energy than your training does, and it builds an aerobic base for free.

THE TARGET

8,000–10,000 steps a day. Not in one block — accumulated. A walk after each meal alone often gets you most of the way there.

EASY WINS

Calls on foot · stairs over the lift · park farther · a ten-minute walk after dinner · a standing desk. Small habits, compounded daily.

THE TRUTH

For a leaner, healthier, better-conditioned body, **a daily step habit beats occasional hard cardio** — every time. Get the steps first; everything else is a bonus on top.



09

BOLTING ONTO YOUR PROGRAM

Conditioning layers onto whatever you're already running. Match the dose to the goal — and protect the training that protects your muscle.

RUNNING...	CONDITIONING DOSE	WHEN
Foundations of Form	2–3 zone-2 + daily steps	Rest days or after lifting
Hypertrophy Method	2 zone-2 + steps · ≤ 1 interval	Away from leg days; recovery comes first
Strength Architecture	2 zone-2 + steps · intervals sparingly	Never the day before a heavy main lift
Recomposition	2–3 zone-2 + 1 interval + high steps	Steps especially — they widen the deficit

THE GUARDRAIL Never stack hard intervals around heavy squat or deadlift days. **If recovery, sleep or your lifts start to slip, cut the intervals first** — then the zone-2 volume. The steps always stay.

"Interference" — cardio blunting muscle — only shows up with excessive, hard cardio crammed next to heavy training. The doses above are built to stay well clear of it.



10

FUEL

Conditioning needs no special diet. It runs on whatever your goal already asks for — you just keep the tank topped up and the body watered.

THREE THINGS ONLY

CARBS

Fuel the hard work

Some carbs before longer or interval sessions — they're the body's preferred fuel for hard efforts.

WATER

Before & after

Conditioning means sweat. Drink to thirst across the day; more around longer sessions.

ELECTROLYTES

If you sweat hard

A pinch of salt or an electrolyte tab on heavy-sweat days keeps energy and cramps in check.

PROTEIN

As your goal sets

Unchanged — keep the protein your training program already calls for. Conditioning doesn't alter it.

MATCH IT TO THE GOAL

Conditioning for fat loss runs alongside a deficit — see **Recomposition** and **Fat-Loss Architecture**. Conditioning for health and capacity needs no change to how you eat at all.

DON'T OUT-EAT IT

A hard session is not a licence to overeat. Conditioning burns less than people assume; the steps and the deficit do the fat-loss work, not a post-workout reward.



11

RECOVERY & THE HEART

The point of conditioning isn't the session — it's the body it leaves behind: one that recovers faster, tires later, and carries a calmer, stronger heart.

THE HEART

The clearest dividend. As the base builds, your resting heart rate drifts down and you recover between heavy sets faster. Track resting HR — a falling number is the engine growing.

INTERVAL FATIGUE

Intervals tax the same recovery your lifting needs. One to two a week, never daily. Zone-2 and steps, by contrast, are restorative — they help you recover.

SLEEP & EASY DAYS

The adaptation happens on the easy days, not the hard ones. Protect sleep, keep most sessions gentle, and the engine quietly grows.

ONE THING TO HOLD

Easy should be easy, hard should be rare. The classic mistake is making every session moderately hard — too taxing to recover from, too gentle to build the top end. Keep the two engines clearly separate and each does its job.



12

THE CONDITIONING LOG

Print this. Tally your weekly zone-2 minutes, interval sessions and average steps — and watch your resting heart rate fall as the weeks pass.

WEEK	ZONE-2 (MIN)	INTERVALS	AVG STEPS	RESTING HR
01 • Base				
02 • Base				
03 • Build				
04 • Build				
05 • Build				
06 • Sharpen				
07 • Sharpen				
08 • Recover				

The number to watch is the last column. A resting heart rate trending down, week over week, is the engine being built — proof the work is working.



12

THE EFFORT CARD

A pocket reference. The whole program comes down to knowing which of these two efforts you're meant to be doing — and staying honest about it.

EFFORT	THE TEST	PACE	HOW OFTEN
Zone 2 — easy	Full sentences, nose-breathing	Conversational	Most days
Intervals — hard	A word or two at most	Hard, repeatable	1-2 / week
All-out — rare	No words at all	Maximal, brief	Short sprints only

MY ZONE-2 PACE IS

MY GO-TO INTERVAL SESSION

If you're ever unsure which effort a session calls for, default to easy. The base is never the thing people overtrain.



13

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

WILL CARDIO KILL MY GAINS?

Not done this way. Mostly easy zone-2, intervals sparingly and away from heavy days — that improves recovery and health without costing muscle. Interference only shows with excessive hard cardio.

HOW MUCH IS ACTUALLY ENOUGH?

Two to three zone-2 sessions plus your daily steps covers health and a leaner look. Add one or two intervals only when you want more top-end capacity.

IS FASTED CARDIO BETTER FOR FAT LOSS?

No real advantage — total deficit decides fat loss. Do it fasted only if it feels better for you; otherwise it doesn't matter.

STEPS OR CARDIO SESSIONS?

Steps first — sustainable, low-cost, and they add up. Sessions layer on top once the daily walking habit is in place.

HIIT OR ZONE-2?

Both, in proportion: zone-2 is most of the work and builds the base; intervals sharpen the top. Most people do the reverse and burn out.

DO I NEED EQUIPMENT?

None required — walking, hills and stairs work. A bike, rower or treadmill just make it easier to pace and gentler on the joints.

CAN I DO IT EVERY DAY?

Zone-2 and steps, yes — they aid recovery. Hard intervals, no: one to two a week, with easy days between.

WHAT AFTER EIGHT WEEKS?

Keep two zone-2 sessions and your steps as a permanent habit. Re-run the interval block any time you want to sharpen the engine again.



BUILD THE ENGINE, NOT JUST THE FRAME.

A body that looks the part but tires on the stairs is half-finished. The engine is quiet work — mostly easy, rarely seen — and it is what lets everything else last. Build it once, then keep it for life.

THE FULL SET

ALL PROGRAMS

Five systems, one standard. Bolt this onto any of them.

EVERY MORNING

THE EDGE

One letter before noon. One principle, one practice.

WHEN YOU'RE READY

COUNSEL

Direct guidance from the studio. By application.

vysnfitness.com